

Matti Savolainen, *The Element of Stasis in William Faulkner: An Approach in Phenomenological Criticism*. Acta Universitatis Tamperensis, ser. A, vol. 217, University of Tampere, 1987. 510 pp. Bibliography and index included.

Having contributed to the Faulkner industry myself, it is perhaps unfair to claim that others should have thought twice before they did the same. Matti Savolainen's voluminous study *The Element of Stasis in William Faulkner: An Approach in Phenomenological Criticism* deals with Faulkner's work as a totality, in an attempt to find possible systems of recurring elements in order to describe and explain it all. Savolainen is well aware that this cannot really be done, but still thinks that Faulkner's total *oeuvre* can be described as the expression of one particular author's transcription (and transformation) of existence. His study shows a thorough knowledge of *all* of Faulkner's work, which is itself rather impressive.

Savolainen displays a keen awareness of the pitfalls of a phenomenological approach which may lead one to find in the actual works only what the method tells one to look for. All the key-terms of phenomenology are used here: intentionality, *Lebenswelt*, experientiality, the author in the work vs. the real-life person. The study is based on the alleged oppositions between a surface structure (a micro level of linguistic units) and a deep level (a system of experiential patterns), mediated between through a macro or thematic level (analysed in terms of chains of experiential patterns). This creates a rather complex structure in the scholar's approach as well as in the resulting dissertation. The terminology and vocabulary of late phenomenology should not mislead readers to think that something is new and revealing when it is, in fact, well established in Faulkner scholarship.

Savolainen presents his methodological framework in the introductory chapter, and, having presented the major critics in the field, he ends up with a position close to that of J. Hillis Miller: a combination of Geneva school phenomenology and the techniques of "formalist approaches" to literature.

In his analysis of *stasis* in Faulkner's work, Savolainen shows the polarities of motion and immobility, sound and silence, and he demonstrates convincingly that these oppositions can be found everywhere on the micro-level of Faulkner's writings. Based on this discussion of all sorts of immobility and silence, Savolainen also demonstrates how the tension between interacting forces is an important thematic aspect of Faulkner's work. The problematic concept of "time" is discussed, mostly in Bergsonian terms, in part IV, and the many observations from this part are used in an informative and perceptive analysis of the dialectics of stasis and motion (part V). The discussion of how Faulkner arrests motion, speed, objects, personal experience or even history, is interesting in itself, although most of the stylistic or rhetorical devices, the "technicalities" of Faulkner's prose, have been described before. This discussion is seen as a mediating step from the micro-level, described earlier, to the overall system of Faulkner's *oeuvre*, thus finally revealing "the author's unique presence in his work" (p. 209).

Given the starting point in phenomenological criticism, it may seem surprising that so little space is devoted to the *results* of the investigation of an author's total work. Part VI has the inevitable title, "Kilroy was here," and, further, "The Author in His Work." Savolainen distinguishes carefully between "the author's phenomenological ego, immanent in the work, and his actual, empirical ego, which is inaccessible through the text" (p. 23). Still it is tempting to look for connections, and to see how the *Lebenswelt* of the author corresponds to the construct that is his fiction. I do not find the discussion of this particularly rewarding in Savolainen's book, and I do think that it is possible to speculate further here: on Faulkner not only as a Southerner of the twentieth century, but also as a modernist; on the qualities of his prose-writing that set him above and apart from all other Southerners of his day and time. I do not here express a wish for more psycho-biographical material on Faulkner; I only indicate that Savolainen may have gone further with his own thoughts about Faulkner's distrust with words, and perhaps discovered something more about the functions of the oppositions, contrasts, contradictions and unresolved tensions.

As a dissertation in the field of American studies written in one of the Nordic countries, one can, despite the critical remarks above, only welcome this well-written and well-informed work.